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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 000671

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/ARPI, NEA/RA, T, P

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TAGS: PREL KPAL MNUC IR IZ XF MU

SUBJECT: MFA UNDER SECRETARY ON IRAN, HAMAS, IRAQ

REF: A. MUSCAT 670  
    B. MUSCAT 649  
    C. MUSCAT 590  
    D. SECSTATE 65124

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo. Reason: 1.4 (b, d).

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Summary  
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11. (C) Foreign Ministry Under Secretary Sayyid Badr reiterated to the Ambassador on April 25 Oman's paramount concern at finding a peaceful resolution to the Iranian nuclear standoff, expressing frustration that creative solutions and confidence-building measures are not being more aggressively pursued. He welcomed offers to continue sharing information on Iran's nuclear program, saying that Oman has a unique dialog with Iran that can serve USG interests. Sayyid Badr said he again urged a visiting Palestinian official on Hamas' need to agree to peaceful dialog with Israel, and responded to news of the increase in USG aid to Palestinians with a request that we find ways to help President Abbas. He hailed progress in the formation of a new Iraqi government.  
End summary.

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Iran  
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12. (C) In an April 25 call on Foreign Ministry Under Secretary Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi, the Ambassador inquired

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about his recent public statement (ref B) on Iran. Sayyid Badr acknowledged it was highly unusual for him to be quoted directly, saying that he was ambushed by the media when seeing off the visiting Spanish foreign minister, and had no idea his remarks would get such wide press distribution. He stood by his basic position on Iran, however, reiterating familiar Omani talking points that "no stone" can be left unturned in the effort to find a peaceful solution to the standoff on Tehran's nuclear program. Repeating some of FM Bin Alawi's remarks to U/S Joseph on April 9 (ref C), Sayyid Badr's central theme was that the mountains of Iranian-Western mistrust built up since Iran's revolution have to be reduced through confidence-building measures if there is to be serious progress on such specific topics as the nuclear file or interference in Iraq. He admitted it would not be easy, but expressed frustration that nobody was even attempting it. Without CBMs, threats of sanctions, setting deadlines, and passing resolutions will simply further harden both sides' positions. He urged that the IAEA be allowed to resolve its own issues with Iran. Noting that the "devil is in the details," the Under Secretary was not certain how to arrive at the desired objective, but said finding a win/win resolution without resorting to violence is Oman's paramount concern.

13. (C) The Ambassador, echoing the Secretary's points to the FM on April 21 (ref D), reminded Sayyid Badr of Iran's many missed opportunities in resolving the crisis, citing the many years Iran hid its nuclear R&D program, numerous visits by IAEA investigators, and the extended negotiations with the EU-3. He assured the Under Secretary, however, that the USG is sensitive to Oman's special concern over Iran given its geographic proximity and joint stewardship of the Strait of Hormuz. Sayyid Badr welcomed the Ambassador's offer to give Oman updates on our views on Iran and its WMD efforts, noting that Oman has a unique and frank dialogue with Iran that can be of benefit to Washington. He stressed that while Oman keeps an objective view of its giant neighbor to the north, it has been able to maintain a useful dialog. He also clarified that his press comment regarding navigation in the Strait of Hormuz was in direct response to a journalist's question, saying that he questioned whether Iran could block the Strait even if it wanted to.

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Palestine/Hamas  
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14. (C) When solicited for his views on recent infighting between Hamas and Fatah, Sayyid Badr said it was obviously unhelpful, as he told the visiting Palestinian Communications Minister Jamal al-Khadri in a reportedly blunt exchange on April 21. He said Oman has told Hamas consistently that it needs to amend its behavior and act like a responsible government rather than resistance party, and that it is not sufficient to allow President Abbas to say one thing and the Hamas government the opposite. The Arabs, Sayyid Badr recounted, will give Hamas some time to sort out its policies, but that its only choice was to accede to international and Arab plans for peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He admitted that he does not know if Hamas will follow Oman's advice. In response to the Ambassador's question, he said there will be no increase in Omani aid to Palestine. He welcomed Secretary Rice's announcement of the increase in USG aid to Palestinians (we provided fact sheets), and urged the USG to find ways to provide direct support to President Abbas.

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Iraq  
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15. (C) Sayyid Badr warmly welcomed the recent progress in forming a new Iraqi government, sardonically noting that after so many months of stalemate, "any government is better than none." It has been a "painful" waiting period, but the Under Secretary was hopeful that a full government will soon be formed, allowing the political process to move forward. The violence in Iraq and terror elsewhere, he said, is "truly crazy."

16. (SBU) True to the Under Secretary's pledge, an MFA statement condemning the recent terror attack in Egypt's Sinai was released April 26; see ref A.

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